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## GUYUSCUTUS, ROYAL NONESUCH AND OTHER HOAXES

by

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Readers of Mark Twain who are at all acquainted with the writings of the Southwest—the *old* Southwest, that is, which, as Joseph G. Baldwin tells us, consisted of Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana,<sup>1</sup> do not need to be reminded that their author was steeped in the literature, oral and written, of the generation of his youth. Others may learn this by reading the scholarship which has grown up about Clemens, especially Bernard DeVoto's *Mark Twain's America* (Boston, 1932), where the indebtedness of genius to an often humble and immaterial source (a useful word, even if Mr. DeVoto does dislike it)<sup>2</sup> is made clear. Mark Twain uses incidents and situations which are part of the folklore of the frontier and the value of noting the appearance of similar scenes in other writers lies in establishing the commonness, one might almost say the vulgarity, of the events.

Common as these occurrences must have been, surely no town was ever so blessed as was the little one-horse town in Arkansas which, in a few short hours, saw a drunken countryman's extravagant behavior, his murder, an attempted lynching in consequence, a circus, scenes from Shakespeare by world-renowned tragedians and finally, to crown all, the King's Cameleopard, or the Royal Nonesuch! Here was stuff, and fine stuff, calculated to make the efforts of more recent exposers of Southern depravity tame indeed. Fine stuff, but not new stuff, for the beauty of chapters twenty to twenty-

<sup>1</sup> *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi* (7th ed., New York, 1854), p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> "Source hunting is the most profitless of literary occupations, and, in the field of humor, is wholly absurd. There is no such thing as the 'source' of a joke." (p. 244, n. 5). Mr. DeVoto, of course, makes the best of both worlds: interspersed with denunciations of source-hunting and strong expressions of disbelief in sources, he calls attention to many passages which the average reader will consider striking parallels, if not actual sources, even though Mr. DeVoto is tempted to look upon them as rather abominable coincidences.

three of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is found not in novelty but in profusion and freshness.

Of all these mixed attractions the most striking was surely the appearance of the Royal Nonesuch: "and the next minute the king come a-prancing out on all fours, naked; and he was painted all over, ring-streaked-and striped, all sorts of colors, as splendid as a rainbow. And—but never mind the rest of his outfit; it was just wild, but it was awful funny."<sup>3</sup> The audience howled at what they saw but, like Oliver, they expected more when there was no more to come. The first group, however, helped to take in a second, and then the entire body of patrons planned to take the king and the duke. We know that the sagacity of the two noblemen saved them from disaster at that time.

For purposes of literary discussion, the Royal Nonesuch was a hoax, and it is my purpose in the following pages to call attention to other members of the same family from, in the main, the literature of the South and old Southwest. Not only was the Royal Nonesuch a hoax, more specifically it was a hoax intended for the financial profit of the perpetrators, and, more specifically still, it was a dramatic hoax, a hoax associated with the world of professional entertainment. By means of a rough and ready classification we shall proceed from hoaxes of the most simple sort to one which seems akin to the superb performance of "the pore disappeared Dauphin, Looy the Seventeen, son of Looy the Sixteen and Marry Antonette."

Hoax, as anyone who cares to refer to the *New English Dictionary* can easily ascertain, is a fairly recent word which may well be a shortened form of *hocus*, but it is not my intention to trace its history here, nor even to demonstrate that Americans of the last century were especially given to hoaxing. Nevertheless Captain Frederick Marryat may be offered as evidence:

The Americans are often themselves the cause of their being misrepresented; there is no country perhaps, in which the habit of deceiving for amusement, or what is termed hoaxing, is so common. Indeed, this and the hyperbole constitute the major part of American humour.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The manuscript of *Huckleberry Finn* gives, for the last sentence: "And—but I won't describe the rest of his outfit; it was just outrageous, although it was awful funny." See DeLancey Ferguson, *Mark Twain: Main and Legend* (Indianapolis, 1943), p. 225.

<sup>4</sup> *A Diary in America with Remarks on its Institutions* (3 vols., London, 1839), I, 8.

As for Mark Twain, Constance Rourke wrote:

His first two conspicuous efforts were hoaxes, in the vein which had become familiar twenty years before: after the gory *Dutch Nick Massacre* came *The Petrified Man*, which wore the old air of mythology, and permitted only the slowest recognition of the fact that the fabulous relic had its thumb to its nose.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the happiest single literary use of the word *hoax* is in the remark of T. B. Thorpe's tall-tale teller, the "Big Bear" of Arkansas when he saw some unusual bear marks on a tree: "Them marks is a hoax, or it indicates the d——t bar that was ever grown."<sup>6</sup> The hoax, then, is an American institution and those which are described hereafter are no more than the cullings of one reader's rather casual survey. I am well aware that the presentation is disjointed, but I have found it impossible to devise an apt series of transitions from the summary of one anecdote to that of another. The use of numerals, if ugly, ought to prevent unnecessary confusion. I must, in all justice, apologize to the memories of the many authors whose humorous efforts I have weakened and curtailed.

Our first group of hoaxes are of the kind which may well be termed simple, though even here certain subdivisions are inevitable. Many hoaxes have but a single victim. (1) Sol. Smith the actor reprints one of Matt Field's stories in which an unhappy Millerite on a river boat was bedeviled by means of a multitude of "shapes" in white robes, followed by a large pig which ran between the believer's legs and carried him several yards.<sup>7</sup> (2) When a cracker farmer came into a city in South Carolina with a load of vegetables plainly labelled "Pertaters and Ternups," a waggish doctor asked him what he had to sell. Apparently unsatisfied with the obvious answer, the doctor further asked, "Got any eggs?" The reply was "no," but by the time the doctor had persuaded a few friends to pursue the same course the cracker, wellnigh frantic, went home with his "pertaters and ternups" unsold.<sup>8</sup> (3) Judge Brown of Geor-

<sup>5</sup> *American Humor* (New York, 1931), p. 213, cf. pp. 59 ff., 181, DeVoto, *Mark Twain's America*, pp. 154 f., and Ivan Benson, *Mark Twain's Western Years* (Stanford University, California, 1938), pp. 75 ff., 90 ff.

<sup>6</sup> W. T. Porter, ed., *The Big Bear of Arkansas and other Sketches* (1845) (Philadelphia, 1858), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Sol. Smith, *Theatrical Management in the West and South* (New York, 1868), pp. 180 f.

<sup>8</sup> T. A. Burke, ed., *Polly Peablossom's Wedding and other Tales* (Philadelphia, [1851]), pp. 89 ff.

gia got drunk one evening at Sterritt's inn and his friends filled his pockets with the landlord's silver. He was horror-struck next morning to find the spoons, but he went back to the inn and made his peace like an honorable man and a judge. A few days later a prisoner before him confessed that he had stolen money while under the influence of liquor imbibed at Sterritt's. He pled "Guilty—but drunk," whereupon the judge requested that a *nolle prosequi* be entered, with the explanation: "That liquor of Sterritt's is mean enough to make a man do anything dirty. *I got drunk on it the other day myself, and stole all of Sterritt's spoons.*"<sup>9</sup> (4) Major Jones, at a party, was induced to play "brother Bob" with his cousin Pete. In accordance with the "rules" of the game, the two were blindfolded, placed in chairs, and then whacked in turn by the on-lookers. When the blow fell the victim would say "Brother, I'm bob'd," and then, in response to the question "Who bob'd you?" would try to guess his assailant. This merry sport was to continue until a correct identification had been given. The major received a heavy blow with a book and named the strongest person in the room. He was wrong, and equally so when he placed the responsibility for a gentle tap on Miss Mary Stallins, the object of his affections: "'No, I never,' ses she." Mary stopped the game as becoming too personal, and soon the full extent of the jest became evident to the major. Cousin Pete had not been blindfolded at all and had been hitting the major all the time. Mary then brought Pete into a "new play" which she had learned in college at Macon, called "Interduction to the King and Queen." Three chairs were put side by side with a sheet over them and the King and Queen took their places on the end chairs. The company, except for the lords and ladies of the court, was then excluded and brought in one by one to be "introduced." Cousin Pete was the first and he came in "bowin and scrapin, and twistin and rigglein and putting on more ares nor a French dancin master." Said the King: "Rise gallant knight . . . rise, we dub you knight of the royal bath." Pete sat on the middle seat and fell into a tub of cold water which had been substituted for the chair in his absence. "He got as mad as a hornet, and sed it was a d—d mean trick to sarve enny body so, specially in cold wether."<sup>10</sup> (5) During the campaign in which Judge Allen and Judge Edwards were rival candidates for the governorship of

<sup>9</sup> The same, pp. 132 ff.

<sup>10</sup> [W. T. Thompson], *Major Jones's Courtship* (Philadelphia, 1844), pp. 111 ff.

Missouri, Allen managed to have Edwards, who was to speak at Benton before him, misdirected into a cedar swamp where he spent a most unhappy night up a tree, fearful of wolves and devoured by mosquitoes. Next day he found Allen at Benton busily misrepresenting his proposed policies and, to add insult to injury, Allen at first refused to recognize the indignant Edwards. When he finally did so, it was with the remark: "You can see by his countenance that expectin' to be elected he has accepted all their mosquito bills!"<sup>11</sup>

(6) Joseph G. Baldwin records an amusing anecdote of Cave Burton at a lawyer's frolic, for which the provisions were "three barrels of oysters, a demijohn of Irish whisky, and a box of lemons." Old Judge Sawbridge, who was such an expert that he could tell the region from which any liquor came by smelling the cork, did Cave out of his share of the oysters by inveigling him to tell one of his characteristically long Kentucky yarns. While the narrative ran on and on, though never long in the same direction, the other lawyers, one or two at a time, retired to the back room and ate all the oysters.<sup>12</sup> (7) A Cincinnati newspaper was so unwise as to print the first chapter of a novel which it received by post. The chapter ended "leaving the principal character suspended by the pantaloons from the limb of a tree over a perpendicular precipice." This forerunner of Pearl White's scenario writer sent in no more chapters and the editor, mocked by the rival press, was forced to bring the story to a brief and ludicrous conclusion of his own.<sup>13</sup>

Some simple hoaxes have a number of victims. (8) Sol. Smith was riding out of Pulaski, Tennessee, and his playful brother Lem went ahead of him and brought together a little army of negroes, whom he told that Sol. had been killed and that his murderer would soon be coming along the road. Sol., hailed and pursued, managed to escape, but was so affected by the experience that he and Lem swore off such jokes for the future.<sup>14</sup> (9) On another occasion, when Sol. was on his way from Columbus to Zanesville, Ohio, his friends, by arrangement, told the stage-driver that Sol. was really Amos Kendall, the Postmaster General, on an *incognito* tour of in-

<sup>11</sup> John S. Robb, *Streaks of Squatter Life* (1846) (Philadelphia, [1858]), pp. 70 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi* (7th ed., New York, 1853), pp. 159 ff.

<sup>13</sup> S. P. Avery, ed., *The Harp of a Thousand Strings* (New York, 1858), pp. 363 f.

<sup>14</sup> *The Theatrical Journey-work and Anecdotal Recollections of Sol. Smith* (Philadelphia, 1854), pp. 62 ff.

spection. At the next village the "news" spread, a citizens' committee was hastily formed to pay its respects to the great Jacksonian, and the inn-keeper not only fed Sol. free, but accused the local postmaster of being a Whig and modestly allowed that he himself would accept the position as soon as it could be vacated.<sup>15</sup> (10) The hotel piazza loungers of Pineville, Georgia, decided one day that two veiled women who drove through the town were men in disguise and when word came almost immediately of a bank robbery in Columbus, they further determined that the "women" were the robbers. A posse which set off in pursuit divided at a cross-road, and the group led by the sheriff shortly met a man who said that he not only had seen the women, but knew them and the very sick bed for which they were bound. The sheriff and his men were chagrined, but got some comfort out of the fact that their friends were still running the wildgoose chase. Back in Pineville, however, the general opinion at first was that the sheriff had been fooled and that his informant was just the man to aid a pair of bank robbers. Opinion soon changed again, but it changed once more when the other half of the posse rode home in triumph with two captives, plainly men in female attire. They were brought before the judge and turned out to be two of the posse who, hearing of the sheriff's lack of success, had determined not to be the only ones laughed at.<sup>16</sup> (11) When Colonel Crockett was travelling with his friends Thimblorig and the Bee hunter, the last named was accustomed to ingratiate himself with the women at each stop and leave his companions to look after the horses. Thimblorig, weary of this behavior, spread the news in one community that the Bee hunter had been bitten by a mad dog. The story had a doubly happy effect: not only was the Bee hunter's annoying popularity destroyed, but their hostess refused to let him come near enough to pay the reckoning.<sup>17</sup> (12) A group of young and intoxicated men determined one night, through sheer light-heartedness, to wake up a sleeping camp meeting throng. They dressed in long white robes and, half with horns and half with turpentine torches, they rode down on the meeting place yelling and tooting, led by a large mule which they had soaked with turpentine and tar and set on fire. The meeting folks were greatly alarmed:

<sup>15</sup> The same, pp. 181 ff. Sol. liked the story enough to reprint it in his *Theatrical Management*, pp. 114 f.

<sup>16</sup> [W. T. Thompson], *Major Jones' Scenes in Georgia* (1844) (Philadelphia, [1848]), pp. 59 ff.

<sup>17</sup> *Col. Crockett's Exploits and Adventures in Texas* (Philadelphia, 1836), pp. 133 ff.

Supplications for mercy, screams of anguish, prayers and blasphemies, horror-stricken moans of the converts, the maniacal shouts of the conscience-stricken sinners, and the calm collected songs of the really righteous, swelled on the wind; mingled with the roaring of the flames, our piercing yells, discordant horns, and the horrible cries of the consuming animal.<sup>18</sup>

Even when a comfortable number of years away it is hard to appreciate the rich humor of the burning mule. (13) Longstreet's "Character of a Native Georgian" is an account of Ned Bruce and especially of his hoaxing behavior at an inn, where he concealed his identity from local curiosity, drank tea and coffee together, mashed up waffles, batter-cakes, muffins, rolls and cornbread on his plate, won the horrified landlady's sympathy with a sad story of an unnatural appetite, bewildered and angered a Frenchman, went to church, where he sang loudly and badly, and performed other feats worthy of Georgia's leading private humorist.<sup>19</sup> (14) Longstreet also tells of the Yankee boy Zeph. Pettibone who used a wooden egg for the Easter "pecking," and thus wiped out the reserves of the innocent boys. His fraud was discovered and his illegal winnings returned, whereupon he got a guinea-egg with which he won almost as many more and then went home, we presume, clutching his hateful of spoils, the broken eggs, to his crafty little Northern bosom.<sup>20</sup> (15) It is also in *Georgia Scenes* that we read of the college debating society for which two sportive members proposed the following topic:

Whether at public elections, should the votes of faction predominate by internal suggestions or the bias of jurisprudence?

Several orators debated this intricate problem with more solemnity than understanding.<sup>21</sup> (16) We have already seen that a camp meeting was fair game for men of spirit, and another instance occurs in "A Millerite Miracle" by C.A.P. of Kentucky. Some jokers, led by Cabe Newham, slung a rope over a branch of an oak towering above the Millerite camp grounds. At the height of the service they

<sup>18</sup> Madison Tensas, *The Swamp Doctor's Adventures in the South-west* (1843) (Philadelphia, 1858), pp. 62 ff. "Madison Tensas" is the pseudonym of Henry Lewis Clay.

<sup>19</sup> [A. B. Longstreet], *Georgia Scenes* (Augusta, Georgia, 1835), pp. 32 ff. Ned Bruce, according to F. B. Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman* (Baton Rouge, 1944), p. 24, was Edmund Bacon, born in Edgefield County, South Carolina.

<sup>20</sup> The same, p. 77.

<sup>21</sup> The same, pp. 144 ff.

managed to fasten one end of the rope to the belt which kept together the white robe of a free negro named Sam. The other end of the rope ran off into the dark where willing hands started Sam on his way to heaven. The sensation was great and became greater when Sam lodged half way up and began to swing, now head up, now head down. In his dismay Sam called upon the Lord:

Lor a massy . . . jist take up poor nigger to um bosom, or lef him down again, *easy, easy*. Lef him down again, please um Lor, and dis nigger will go straight to um bed!

At this point an anxious and envious sister seized Sam by the hair as he swung by and asked to be taken up too, but the belt broke and Sam came down.<sup>22</sup>

A hoax is often in the form of a tall tale. (17) When Bill Meriweather, a Kentucky shoat buyer, arrived at the "Sign of the Buck" tavern, he told his hostess that "craps" were bad in his part of the world:

There's a new varmint come around in our county, that's got a mortal likin for the tobaker crap. They looks a good deal like a fox, but are as big as a three-year-old nigger, and can climb a tree like a squirrel, and they steals a dozen or so 'hands' every night, and next mornin' ef you notice, you'll see all the tops of the pin-oaks around the plantation kivered with them a-dryin', and the infernal Chawbacks—that's what we call 'em—a settin' up in a crotch, a chawin' what is cured, and squirtin' ambeer all over the country.

When the hostess, properly impressed by that, went on to ask about his brother Joe, he exhibited great sorrow, but finally told her that Joe got his buckskin breeches wet and stood by a log fire until they began "to smoke and draw up kinder," and lifted Joe right off the ground. Even seizing hold of a tree was useless to hold him down, as the tree was pulled out of the earth. At last Bill told him to cut the straps, but after he "made a rip at the sole of his left boot . . . the t'other leg shot up like, started him, and the last thing I seed ov brother Joe he was *whirlin' round like a four-spoked wheel with the rim off, away down clost toward sundown!*"<sup>23</sup> To fill the stranger within the gates full of unlikely yarns was a common practice. (18) Samuel Hele, Esq. told a new school mistress—"one of those

<sup>22</sup> W. T. Porter, ed., *A Quarter Race in Kentucky and other Sketches* (Philadelphia, 1847), pp. 60 ff.

<sup>23</sup> *Polly Peablossom's Wedding and other Tales*, pp. 114 ff.

'strong-minded women of New England' "—so many stories of the depravity of the village that she left town next day. He had been particularly inventive of stories about the treatment of slaves. There were, he said, two groups of planters on opposite sides of the Sanotchie river, who had a feud "growing out of the treatment of negro children. Those who sold them off charged the other siders with inhumanity, in drowning theirs, like blind puppies, in the creek; which was resented a good deal at the time, and the accusers denounced as abolitionists. I did hear of one of them, Judge Dick Swinger, feeding his nigger dogs on the young varmint, as he called them; but I don't believe the story, it having no better foundation than current report, public belief, and general assertion."<sup>24</sup> (19) Dan Marble had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Trollope and gave her some flamboyant details of American wonders. Among other marvels he informed her that the Mammoth Cave, to say nothing of its visitors, rejoiced in "a natural fountain of pure brandy."<sup>25</sup>

A number of hoaxes involve actors and entertainers in their professional capacity. (20) A company which was appearing at Natchez in 1828 broke in a new member, a cockney vocalist who was also a dentist, by forging a letter to him in the name of a prominent justice of the peace. The justice hated actors and all their ways and would hardly have invited the Thespian to dinner and, at the same time, to operate on his wife's jaw. The actor-dentist had no sooner announced himself and his professions when he was thrown out of the house. His comment was to the point: "Gentlemen, that 'ere hinivation and the 'ole concern was a wile 'oax!"<sup>26</sup> (21) One night in 1828 at Port Gibson, Mississippi, Sol. Smith's brother Lem announced to an expectant house that Sol. had met with a sudden indisposition. The audience was allowed to infer that Sol. had been taken drunk, an unforgiveable offence to eager ticket holders. There were groans and hisses and one violent fellow rose from his seat and marched down the aisle, loudly asserting that he would see the show or fight. He reached the stage while the whole house waited in pleased anticipation, and then, even now it is hard to believe, he turned out to be Sol. himself ready to go on with the show!<sup>27</sup> (22) Few people have missed seeing a country circus in which at

<sup>24</sup> J. G. Baldwin, *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi*, pp. 290 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Falconbridge, (J. F. Kelley) *Dan Marble* (New York, 1851), pp. 224 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Sol. Smith's *Theatrical Apprenticeship . . . Comprising a Sketch of the First Seven Years of his Professional Life* (1845) (Philadelphia, 1854), pp. 128 ff.

<sup>27</sup> The same, pp. 213 ff.

some point or other a very drunken man does not stumble into the ring and insist, despite the remonstrances of the apprehensive ring-master, on riding the dangerous thoroughbred. The apparent drunkard soon exposes the tights and the skill of Signor Volcano and all is well. Huck saw such an act in the circus in Arkansas and was sensibly impressed, but on a similar occasion Dr. Peter Jones of Georgia was so injudicious as to intervene with a resultant humiliation which was both physical and spiritual.<sup>28</sup> Amateur actors were often hoaxed by the professionals. Sol. Smith tells several stories of this form of persecution. (23) The smallness of his company once forced Mr. Purdy Brown, a blameless manager, to take the part of Procles in *Damon and Pythias*. On other occasions he had been asked to take non-existent parts and, when he could not find them had been told that he was looking in the wrong edition. This time his faithless coach told him that his business included seizing Damon by the throat when the latter used strong language to him. He did so and, with the true amateur's zeal, nearly choked Damon before he was forcibly removed.<sup>29</sup> (24) At Cincinnati in 1844 a local doctor asked to be allowed to do Hamlet. He was referred to the "Committee on Authors and Amateurs," which gave him a rehearsal, in the course of which he was required to sing much of the play-scene, because Hamlet mentions the "pious chanson." The doctor, though stage-struck, was not wholly a fool and withdrew his petition.<sup>30</sup> (25) A Georgia youth who wanted to become an actor in the worst way applied to Sol., who prepared him for the role of the Prince of Morocco in the *Merchant of Venice*. The preparation consisted of making the tyro get a suit of red morocco leather and in that splendor to ride through the streets of Montgomery, Alabama, to the undisguised delight of the populace.<sup>31</sup>

The audience in Arkansas was not the only one to be hoaxed for the profit of the hoaxer. (26) Sol. Smith describes part of the career of Andrew Jackson Allen, the self-styled Father of the American Stage, whose pronunciation suggested that he was continually afflicted with a cold in the head and "without a pocket handkerchief to help himself with":

In 1822 he was in Cincinnati, where I was editing a paper, and he was then engaged in sending up a series

<sup>28</sup> [W. T. Thompson], *Major Jones' Scenes in Georgia*, pp. 29 ff.; cf. DeVoto, *Mark Twain's America*, p. 254.

<sup>29</sup> *Theatrical Management*, p. 86.

<sup>30</sup> The same, pp. 259 f.

<sup>31</sup> The same, pp. 270 f.

of balloons, in opposition to one Mons. Dumileau, and appealing in his advertisements to the patriotic feelings of the Cincinnatians to sustain *his* balloons, on the ground that they were the true *American* article, while those of Dumileau's were decidedly *French*.

He went into Virginia, causing balloons to ascend from every village. At one of his stands he found great difficulty in collecting together the proper materials for generating gas; nevertheless he advertised that the exhibition would take place; and providing a quantity of the spirits of turpentine to burn under the balloon, hired a large garden, into which the Virginians flocked in great numbers, each paying fifty cents at the gate. When the hour of ascension arrived, the exhibitor found that with all his exertions it would be impossible to cause the balloon to mount! He had a number of juvenile assistants, who were busy about the inner enclosure, and to them he addressed himself, first handing an old bull's eyed watch to the largest boy—

"Look here, by boys—I've got to go add purchase sobe bore *sulphuric acid*—you take this watch, add whed the hadd poidts at the hour of two, set fire to this here turpentine—do you hear?"

The boys said that they *did* hear, and promised obedience. The master spirit made his way to the gate, where he requested the doorkeeper to "hadd over the fudds, as there was such a crowd there was do telling what bight happed id the bustle." He then mounted a pony he had wisely provided for the purpose, and galloped off for the drug store—but mistaking the way, he found himself, at precisely two o'clock, on a very high hill overlooking the scene of his late operations. The boys were true to their promise, and communicated the fire to the turpentine at the appointed time, the *balloon went up*, but it was in small flaky fragments; and the humbugged Virginians began to look about for the operator—but in vain! With \$600 in his pockets he was wending his way toward some city where gas could be more easily generated. In giving an account of this affair, our venerable friend says—"Dab the idferdal ballood! I foudd there was do use id tryidg to bake it rise; so, as I dislike bakidg apologies, I though I would bake byself scarce: Whed I got od that hill add looked back, the boys had set fire to the ballood, add such a sboke rose up!—the whole village appeared to be od fire—d—d if it didn't look like a youdg Sodob add Goborrow!"<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Theatrical Journey-Work*, pp. 226 ff.

(27) A theatrical company found itself financially embarrassed in a small town in the "Great West." Much of its trouble was due to the persistent and malicious attacks of Elder Persimmon Slack, who did not hold with play acting or actors. One day the Elder announced in the *Skinville Disseminator* that "West's great picture of Death on the Pale Horse" would soon be exhibited locally and that it was to be considered far superior to the abominations of the theatre. The picture arrived in due course, was exhibited for a fee in Elder Slack's church, and was greatly admired, especially by the Elder who did not notice that, by a remarkable coincidence, Malice, one of the members of Death's train, displayed "the yellow skin, restless eye, and ignoble mouth" of Elder Slack. At the next showing even the Elder could not fail to observe that now Malice was attired in Slack's black coat and pantaloons. Just then the exhibitor of the genuine picture appeared and it was learned that the "artist" of the company had painted the picture in all haste, and that the actors had departed in equal haste with the receipts.<sup>33</sup> (28) One of Longstreet's most amusing sketches describes an impecunious "band of gay spirits" who were inspired by the impending departure of an exhibition of wax works to substitute themselves for the effigies and carry on the show. There was, inevitably some trouble in casting. One man, greatly padded, took the part of Daniel Lambert, the six hundred pound Englishman. Another assumed the role of the Sleeping Beauty:

It is well known, that the interest of the Sleeping Beauty is much enlivened by an exposed bosom, by which reposes a lovely infant. Even Clomes' (*the ring-leader's*) ingenuity could not supply these.

The bosom, therefore, was draped and the infant made of rags. Eliza Failes and her murderous lover, Jason Fairbanks, were depicted. "Eliza" refused to enact the moment when her cut throat was bleeding her life away, and so Fairbanks was shown holding her by the hair and with upraised knife. "The other figures, being merely distinguished personages, were easily represented." As a sign of good will the management furnished a free corpse in the anteroom. The corpse had no make-up, although it was rendered pallid by the aid of "a plate of burning spirits with a little salt thrown into it." When the crowd was gathering for the first showing a dumb

<sup>33</sup> Joseph M. Field, *The Drama in Pokerville . . . and other Stories* (Philadelphia, 1847), pp. 118 ff.

man, a friend of the "corpse," believing his old companion really dead, leaned over his body and caught a strong aroma of brandy from his breath:

He rose in transports—pointed to Pleasant's face, then to his own, touched his nose, gave it a significant curl, snuffed gently, and then clapping both hands to his stomach, he commenced inhaling and respiring, with all the tone and emphasis of a pair of blacksmith's bellows.

The corpse came to life at this point, chased away his dumb friend, and proceeded to act as historian to the waxworks. His first customer was Rory Brushwood, "a raw-boned, awkward, gawky son of the forest," who thought the Sleeping Beauty anything but beautiful, considered that the infant looked like a "screech-owl in petticoats," and felt that Lambert's face was "mighty little for his belly and legs." This discrepancy was explained as due to his diet of "grass-nuts and potatoes: you know they always puff up the lower parts, mightily." When they came to the murder tableau, Jason pulled his victim's hair a little and she grinned.

"Gentlemen," said Rory, in a tone of awful dignity and self-satisfaction, as he turned gravely to the bystanders, "gentlemen, its flesh and blood. . . . If I didn't see that fellow wink, and that woman *squinch* her face, then hell's a dancing room."

The guide invited Rory to touch Jason's cheek and when he did so the murderer bit his finger. This act brought the performance to a close and "if ever you saw waxworks cut dirt, they cut it then. . . . Rory now became clamorous for his money; but the doorkeeper was not to be found; and, indeed, claimed and kept, for his services, all that was made; leaving the performers to settle their bills as best they could."<sup>34</sup>

In addition to Bill Meriweather's Chawbacks,<sup>35</sup> there are other excursions into unnatural natural history. (29) George P. Burnham wrote of a countryman, come to Boston to celebrate the Fourth, who was greatly impressed by two Tremont Street signs, one on either side of the point where Bromfield enters Tremont. To the left he saw

MUSEUM and to the right LITTELL'S LIVING AGE.

<sup>34</sup> *Georgia Scenes*, pp. 195 ff.

<sup>35</sup> See p. 258.

He put two and two together, decided that he wanted to see the "crittur," and stood at the office door loudly asking when the show opened. No denial or explanation would serve, and at last a wag in the crowd which had collected fastened a handful of lighted fire-crackers to the yokel's coat. As they exploded someone shouted "look out! the crittur's loose!" The visitor to Boston dashed along Colonnade Row to the foot of the Common and escaped to the safety of the Providence Station and a train for home.<sup>36</sup> (30) Yankee Hill, assisted by the Boston Brass Band, was once appearing in Bangor, Maine, in an entertainment entitled "A Musical Olio." At the close of one performance a simple member of the audience insisted that the show had not been given in full:

O, come now, don't the bill say that you've got a Olio? now I want to see the critter; I never heard of the animal afore, and I'm death on critters. I thought maybe you did not like to show the critter to the women, but I want to see the Olio.<sup>37</sup>

Now, perhaps at long last, we come to the creature which seems closest of all to the Royal Nonesuch. This fabulous monster is the Guyuscutus,<sup>38</sup> to use the earliest recorded form of its name, whose habitat was territory occupied by impecunious and ingenious sharpers, and which, as we shall observe was seldom seen. Indeed, the most important single fact about the Guyuscutus was the way in which it shunned public appearance. The Guyuscutus makes, or rather does not make, its first discovered bow in a piece called "Raising the Wind," which was printed in *The Spirit of the Times* on October 4, 1845. It was one of the "Splinters from my Every-day Book," sent from Boston by "The Young 'Un," a signature employed by George P. Burnham, author of the skit about the country man and the *Living Age*. I give the full text of "Raising the Wind."

<sup>36</sup> [F. A. Durivage and G. P. Burnham], *Stray Subjects* (1848) (Philadelphia, 1851, pp. 62 ff.

<sup>37</sup> W. K. Northall, ed., *Life and Recollections of Yankee Hill* (New York, 1850), pp. 22 ff.

<sup>38</sup> This paper, the materials for which were brought together during more than ten years, was almost ready for publication when I came upon the following statement in Bernard DeVoto's *Mark Twain at Work* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1942), p. 68, "Professor Walter Blair of the University of Chicago, a leading authority on Mark Twain, believes that it (*The Royal Nonesuch*) was related to a widespread folk yarn of the old southwestern frontier which had to do with the fabulous creature known as the gyascutus, apparently a very phallic beast." Professor Blair has been doubly kind: he not only permits me to pursue a subject which he had every reason to feel that he had preempted, but he also contributed several references which I did not have and which I acknowledge hereafter.

A good story is told by somebody—we don't recollect who—of a couple of Yankees who chanced to be travelling at the South, and had run short of funds. Out of "tin," and out at the toes, they hit upon the following expedient to raise the rhino.

By dint of address they contrived to come it over the printer, and procured a quantity of hand-bills, giving notice to the denizens of the town where they were stopping, that "*a monster Guyuscutus*," of the genus "*humm*," would be exhibited on the following day, at a certain place—admittance 25 cents, children half price. A curtain was obtained, which was drawn across one end of the apartment where the show was to come off, and the time having arrived, one of the worthy pair performed the part of doorkeeper and receiver-general, while his companion in sin was busy behind the screen (which was so arranged as to prevent discoveries) where he kept up an incessant and most unearthly moaning, while the company were entering and being seated. The hour having at last arrived for the show to commence, the doorkeeper left his post, and marching across the hall, which was crowded with men, women and children, he disappeared behind the curtain. Immediately after his exit a terrific howling, barking, and chaffering commenced, in the midst of which the clattering of chains and a heavy fall or two, were distinctly heard. A terrific struggle appeared to be going on behind the green baize, and an occasional "Oh! ah—hold hard, Jim"—"hit him on the head"—"that's it"—"no it isn't," etc., were heard for some minutes by the audience in front, who by this time had become greatly excited, and not a little alarmed. Amidst the call for the "manager" the exclamations were heard—"he'll break his chains"—"*there he goes!*"—and the doorkeeper rushes from behind the scenes, hatless and breathless, his hair on end, while he shouts at the top of his lungs—"Save yourselves, gentlemen! Save your children! *The Guyuscutus is loose!*"

It needs hardly to be added that the immediate rush for the door was "immense," and that in the *melee*, the overturning of chairs and settees—the shrieks of the women, and the yelling of the children, our Yankees mizzle—while the audience, upon recovering their feet and their senses, only learn, too late, that the "proprieters" of the exhibition have sloped, and that, individually and collectively—*they had been done brown!*<sup>39</sup>

We may note three things: first, Burnham was right in calling it

<sup>39</sup> *The Spirit of the Times*, XV (1845), 370.

a good story; second, he said that it had been told before; and, third, that the same "punch-line" is used in "Raising the Wind" and in the anecdote about the *Living Age*.<sup>40</sup>

The next appearance of the story was in the *Knickerbocker* for July, 1846, where it was introduced into a rambling and anonymous serial entitled "Adventures of a Yankee-Doodle."<sup>41</sup> The new version differs in a number of details, and one feels that the original story had to be elaborated and elevated socially to suit the tastes of the *Knickerbocker's* readers, who were, after all, a touch above the regulars of *The Spirit of the Times*. This time there are six heroes, Yankee sharpers met by chance in one of the larger Georgia towns whither they had been attracted by the fall races.

They put up at the greatest hotel of the place, where they cursed and swore, drank and frolicked, and for ten days filled the place with uproar. . . . Here they were calling perpetually for "juleps," which they imbibed out of a long straw, or even stronger waters.

When the races ended they were without a dollar among them, and yet had a hotel bill for two hundred and fifty dollars.

The next day it was published in the place that a monstrous curiosity had been brought into town over night; "The Gyanousa, from the disputed territory of Penobscot; a monster of gigantic proportions. He vegetates on the tops of trees, and gets his living on the tallest branches of the poplar." All this accompanied by a vast demonstration of a picture, a wood-cut, or rather a would-be cut, which one of the club carved out with his pen-knife from a block of wood, while the printer set up the types of the advertisement. Tusks, horns and humps of a singular model were represented, such as belong to no recognized class in Liberia, the Southern continent, or the "United'n States'n." This creature would be exhibited in the theatre, accompanied by a band of music and several curiosities, the whole presenting an entertainment of which the most fastidious need not be afraid. "Clergy and Professors of Natural History respectfully invited to attend, gratis."

<sup>40</sup> *Stray Subject* was published three years after the appearance of "Raising the Wind", but most of its contents had had previous periodical publication, and there is no certainty that Burnham had not written about the *Living Age* before he did "Raising the Wind." One wonders why he did not include the latter story in his collection, most of which is far inferior to it.

<sup>41</sup> This and several subsequent references I owe to the entries under *guyanosa* and *guyascutus* in the *Dictionary of American English*.

When the night came:

The theatre was crowded; and when the footlights were raised, an audience really brilliant for beauty and gems and jewels, was presented, and an excited flutter of fans began. . . .

The musicians crawled into their places, and began the discordant twanging of their instruments. They played an overture very familiar to theatre-goers. Then came a long pause, broken by cat-calls and an impatient stamping of feet. Another overture, tolerated with extreme unwillingness. When that was finished, a dead pause succeeded. Not a word was spoken. Not a fan moved, not a ribband fluttered in the breeze. The curtain was about to rise. The monster was at hand. A rumbling like distant thunder was heard, and at the same time faint shrieks in various parts of the theatre. Suddenly a tumultuous bellowing, like ten bulls, filled the whole house with alarm, and in the midst of fainting and consternation the curtain rose. The stage presented nothing but the tattered scenery of a house and balcony like that under which the Seguin's used to sing when the opera required a serenade. Expectation was at a painful pitch; nor was it long left unsatisfied. An alarm resounded from without, and a man rushed upon the stage from the left wing, his eyes blood-shot, his hair dishevelled and standing on end, horror depicted in all his features. He made violent gesticulations, and clasped his hands above his head in agony. "Ladies and gentlemen! Leave the house immediately! Save yourselves! THE GYANOUSA AM LOOSE!"<sup>42</sup>

Despite the change from Guyuscutus to Gyanousa and the greatly elaborated machinery of the hoax, the story is the same, and I see no reason to doubt that it was rewritten from Burnham's version.

Now the animal travels straight across the continent and makes its bow in Oregon, as we learn from Randall V. Mills's "Frontier Humor in Oregon and its Characteristics":<sup>43</sup>

The gyascutus was, clearly, a native Oregonian. On October 16, 1846, the *Spectator* called attention to some "original matter" on its front page. This was a sketch signed by "An Ox Driver," and entitled "The Guias-kuitus." It was the story of a typical frontier saw. It told of two Yankees, without funds in a small Southern

<sup>42</sup> *Knickerbocker*, XXVIII (1846), 36 ff.

<sup>43</sup> *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, XLIII (1942), 354-55. I owe this reference to Dr. R. M. Dorson.

town, who advertised the display of a "living guias-kuitus" from the wilds of Penobscot, admission twenty-five cents. When a crowd gathered in the hall, one of the Yankees described the fearsome creature and then disappeared beneath the curtain, beneath whose edge the audience had watched the shaggy hoofs of the beast, "to stir him up" and make him howl. From behind the curtain came assorted roars and clankings of chains until suddenly the Yankee, terror-stricken, but maintaining his dignity, rushed out, crying: "Ladies and gentlemen, save yourselves; the Guiaskuitus is loose." Whereupon the crowd rushed out through the front door and down the street. In the meantime, the guias-kuitus and the other Yankee decamped through a rear window, and the two sharpers met outside the town to split the take.

The sketch was not entirely original. Sometime before 1846, George P. Burnham had published "He Wanted to See the Animal," which told of a visiting yokel who, seeing the sign "Littell's Living Age" on a publisher's door, insisted on paying admission to see the creature and would not leave until a prankster shouted to him to run because the Age was loose. The basic situation was picked up by an anonymous contributor (perhaps Burnham himself) to the July, 1846 issue of the *Knickerbocker Magazine* as Chapter Six of the "Adventures of a Yankee Doodle." The story here is expanded from the original situation, although more discursive. The Age, however, is now the "Guy-anousa," a native of the Penobscot, but otherwise the story is merely a developed version with more characters and additional details of the *Spectator's* version. The major original contribution by the *Spectator* had been the name of the animal.

The *Spectator's* account, which I have read only in Mr. Mills's summary, would seem to be a close imitation from the *Spirit of the Times*, although the statement that the creature came from the Penobscot was probably due to the *Knickerbocker*. Mr. Mills's suggestion that Burnham might have been the writer for the *Knickerbocker* is perhaps unlikely, but that it was happy, or even inspired, is proved by the fact that Burnham did write the version in the *Spirit of the Times*.<sup>44</sup>

A few years later the yarn turns up once more, this time in the

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<sup>44</sup> We recognize, of course, that the form of the name was not the contribution of the Oregonian author and cannot, therefore, easily accept Mr. Mills's tentative proposal (p. 355) that a pun on a Chinook phrase was involved.

Editor's Drawer of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Now there is a single hero and, perhaps in keeping with the magazine's middle-class touch, he is by no means a perfect rascal. The sketch begins:

This is almost equal to the Yankee expedient for "raising the wind" some years ago, in one of our far-western states. The exhibitor had tried various ways of "getting an honest living," as he called it, without hard work.

After working on a farm for many years, he tried in succession clock-peddling, school-keeping, phrenology, dentistry, and at last a combination of phrenology and zoology.

He gave out that on a certain evening, after his phrenological lecture had been concluded, he would exhibit to the audience two of the most remarkable creatures that had ever been publicly exhibited in any country. They had been caught among the sublime fastnesses of the Rocky Mountains; and were:

First, an animal known in that remote and seldom-visited region as the "*Prock*;" a creature that was only caught (and caught always with the greatest difficulty) on the side of a mountain, along which, and nowhere else, could he graze. He had a short hind-leg, and a short foreleg also, for the convenience of browsing on the mountain side, the discrepancy being intended to keep him erect; and the only way in which he could be caught was to "head him" on the side of the mountain, when he would turn suddenly round, and his long legs coming on the uphill side, he would fall down, from lack of underpinning on the lower side, when he at once became an easy prey to the hunter!

The other animal was called the *Guyanosa*; a terrific monster, and very dangerous, caught in one of the wildest passes of the Rocky Mountains, by some forty hunters, who secured him by lassos, after he had been chased for four days. Dangerous as he was, however, the lecturer said, he had been strongly secured with chains, and could be seen without any apprehension on the part of the audience.

The eventful night at length arrived; the phrenological lecture was delivered to a crowded house; and all the spectators were awaiting with breathless expectation the rising of a green baize curtain which had been suspended behind the lecturer, and from whence had come, at different times during the intellectual performance, the most hideous sounds.

Before proceeding to exhibit the animals, the lecturer dwelt at some length upon the characteristics of each; and describing, especially, the ravenous nature of the *Guyanosa*, and his enormous strength. He then retired behind the curtain, to arrange the animals for immediate exhibition.

There was an interval of some five or six minutes, when a great clanking of chains was heard, and a roar, half animal, half human, which shook the whole house. In a moment a shriek, as of one "smit with sudden pain," was heard, and out rushed the exhibitor, his hair erect, his eyes staring from their sockets, and dire terror depicted in every feature:

"Save yourselves! ladies and gentlemen!—save yourselves!" he exclaimed: "the *Guyanosa* has broken loose, and has already killed the *Prock*!"

The house was cleared in two minutes; and, what is remarkable, neither the lecturer, the "Prock," nor the "*Guyanosa*" was ever seen in the village afterward.

There were some who doubted whether the strange animals were present at all; but such incredulous persons were answered by hundreds:

"Why, we heard 'em howl, as plain as we hear you speak!"

Of course that settled the question entirely!<sup>45</sup>

This version is clearly drawn from Burnham's, but the author would seem to have known the account in the *Knickerbocker* as well, or at least a rescension in which the name of the monster was similar to that found in the "Adventures of a Yankee-Doodle."

The Prock is a curiosity authenticated at an earlier date<sup>46</sup> than the Guyuscutus, and the writer for *Harper's* might have found the creatures side by side in an item in the Editor's Table of the *Knickerbocker*, where we read of a party of hunters who drove the available game to one end of an island in Lake George:

There were two moose, three black bears, one "woolly horse," some twenty deer, seven panthers, two foxes, four gaunt wolves, one "prock," one "guyanosa," and a young Penobscot ice-breaker.<sup>47</sup>

The two animals remained together in the next document to which we shall refer, "The Natural History of Oregon," by Dr. Herman Ellenbogen, M.D., which was printed in the San Francisco *Herald*

<sup>45</sup> *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, VII (1853), 708 f.

<sup>46</sup> The *Dictionary of American English* has an occurrence of *prock* from 1840.

<sup>47</sup> *Knickerbocker*, XXXIV (1849), 93. I owe this reference to Professor Blair.

on December 10, 1855. Dr. Ellenbogen, not to keep the reader in suspense, was in actuality George H. Derby, the humorist who wrote under the names of Squibob and John Phoenix. Dr. Ellenbogen gave an account of the scientific discoveries made by expeditions organized by the Government for the survey of the railroad routes to the Pacific coast, and he was able to report the acquisition of both a Guyuscutus and a Prock. "The Natural History of Oregon" has not been reprinted among Derby's works and I quote the following summary from Stewart:

The gyascutus (*Gyascutus Washingtoniensis*), described as a kind of gigantic sloth, was formerly but incorrectly bruited a dangerous beast of prey. The popular expression of alarm, "The gyascutus is loose," was thus seen to be unfounded. In other respects the animal came up to expectations, being described as three feet tall and nine feet long and covered with a heavy shield resembling that of some great turtle. The name itself the learned doctor declared to be of classical origin being literally *Gyas scutos* (sic) or Gyas's shield after the description of that hero in the Fifth Book of the *Aeneid*.<sup>48</sup>

On February 28, 1856, the *Herald* announced that Dr. Ellenbogen had brought in a fragment of the creature's shield:

The fragment in question . . . is elliptical in shape, about seven inches long by four in width. It is of bone, the structure clearly visible within, while the outer surface is rough, something like a shark skin prepared, but differs entirely from that, in being made up of irregular patches, nicely fitting, like stones in a mosaic, their outlines clearly marked by dark lines, or slight depressions. The sphericity of the fragment is such that it evidently must have belonged to an animal vastly larger than a turtle. It is clearly distinguishable from the shell of that animal, by its light color, the mosaic-like patches of which it is made up, its size and the roughness upon the exterior, while its heavy bony structure forbids the idea of its ever having formed the covering of a shark, or any other marine animal of which we have knowledge.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> George R. Stewart, *John Phoenix, Esq., The Veritable Squibob* (New York, 1937), p. 162; see also R. V. Mills, "Frontier Humor in Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, XLIII (1942), 353-354 and DeLancey Ferguson, *Mark Twain: Man and Legend* (Indianapolis, 1943), p. 81. Dr. Ellenbogen's report was reprinted in *The Spirit of the Times*, but I have not seen the issue.

<sup>49</sup> Stewart, pp. 163 f. Stewart adds this comment: "From this description

Almost inevitably the Gyscutus became one of the stories said to have been told by President Lincoln. In this instance the attribution, entirely and openly fictitious, is found in the *Letters of Major Jack Downing, of the Downingsville Militia*,<sup>50</sup> one of the numerous anonymous imitations of Seba Smith's original Major Jack.

The other day the Kernel got off a good joke on Seward. You know what a solem looking chap he is naterally. Wal, since he got to be Chief Clerk of the President, he seems to look solemmer than ever. He cum into Linkin's room, an the Kernel ses, "Have you heerd the news, Boss?" "No," ses Seward, "what is it?" "Wal," ses Linkin, "the Giascutis is loose." "What's that?" ses Seward. "Why," ses Linkin, "ain't you never heerd the story of the Giascutis?" Seward sed he never had. "Wal," ses the Kernel, "I must tell you. Several years ago, a couple of Yankees were travellin out West, an they got out of money. So they koncluded to "raise the wind" as follers:—They were to go into a village, an announce a show, pretendin that they had a remarkabul animal, which they had jest captured on the Rocky Mountings. A bran new beast such as was never seen before. The name was the 'Giascutis.' It was to be shown in a room, and one of the fellers was to play 'Giascutis.' He was put behind a screen an had some chains to shake, an he also contrived to growl or howl as no critter ever did before. Wal, the people of the village all cum to see the Giascutis, an, after the room was filled, his companion began to explain to the audience what a terribul beast he had, how he killed ten men, two boys and five hosses in ketchin him, an now how he had got him, at 'enormous expense,' to show him. Jest as everybody was gapin an starin, thar was, all at once, a most terrific growlin, and howlin, an rattlin of chains; an, in the excitement, the showman, almost breathless, yelled out, at the top of his voice, 'the Giascutis is loose. Run! run! run!' An away went the people down stairs, heels over head, losin all they had paid, an seein nothin. Now," ses Linkin, "the Merry-mac is out, an when I read about the vessels, an tug-boats, an steamers, all scamperin off as soon as she was seen, I thought she was the 'Giascutis,' sure, only I am afraid she is a real Giascutis, an no mistake." Since

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the object seems hardly identifiable, but from the sometimes scatological nature of Phoenix's oral humor one is ready to guess at some elaborately developed obscenity."

<sup>50</sup> New York, 1864. I owe this reference to Professor Blair.

then, Linkin calls the Merrymac the Giascutis all the time.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the fact that the story is spoiled in the telling, something of which President Lincoln would hardly have been guilty, the resemblance to Burnham's version is so clear that the reference to the Rocky Mountains, which reminds us of *Harper's*, may well be no more than a coincidence.

In the manuscript of *Huckleberry Finn*, the Royal Nonesuch appears as "The Tragedy of the Burning Shame," and Clemens wrote as follows about its origin, when memorializing his old friend Jim Gillis:

In one of my books—*Huckleberry Finn*, I think—I have used one of Jim's impromptu tales, which he called "The Tragedy of the Burning Shame." I had to modify it considerably to make it proper for print, and this was a great damage. As Jim told it, inventing it as he went along, I think it was one of the most outrageously funny things I have ever listened to. How mild it is in the book, and how pale; how extravagant and how gorgeous in its unprintable form!<sup>52</sup>

Mark Twain was with Gillis for three months late in 1864 and early in 1865, and of the story which Gillis told him we know no more than we can learn from the quotation and from the scene in *Huckleberry Finn*. A passage from one of Clemens's letters, quoted by DeVoto,<sup>53</sup> gives the impression that Dick Stoker was the original teller, or actor, of the story. The King's performance was, no doubt, a burlesque phallic dance,<sup>54</sup> but we are left in doubt as to what the story element, if any, was. The only suggestion which I have found that the Guyuscutus was an improper appearing beast is made in the quotation from DeVoto which I gave earlier,<sup>55</sup> and that may well be founded on the comment which Stewart added to the description of the animal's shield.<sup>56</sup> With the best will in the world I can read nothing into Derby's language except mockery of the pedantry of scientific diction.

<sup>51</sup> Pp. 64-66. The letter is dated April 15, 1862, and was originally printed in *The New York Weekly Caucasian* (later *The New York Weekly Day Book*), presumably shortly after that date. I have not been able to see this periodical.

<sup>52</sup> B. DeVoto, ed., *Mark Twain in Eruption* (New York, 1940, p. 361. For other changes from the manuscript, see DeVoto, *Mark Twain at Work*, pp. 67-68, 82-85.

<sup>53</sup> *Mark Twain at Work*, p. 68, n. 13.

<sup>54</sup> Ferguson, *Mark Twain: Man and Legend*, pp. 224 f.

<sup>55</sup> See p. 264, n. 38.

<sup>56</sup> See p. 271, n. 49.

The one suggestion, and it can be no more, which it seems safe to make is that Gillis, or Stoker, knew the story concerning the exhibition of the Guyuscutus and worked it into a phallic pantomime in which little save the frame of the original yarn survived. If, however, we accept the survival of the frame, we may well believe that the version of the story which was transmogrified in the far west was that represented by Burnham's "Raising the Wind," since in both cases we have two sharpeners and improvised machinery. It must be confessed, nevertheless, that there is a link with the account in *Harper's* in the fact that the Duke had among his handbills one which announced that "the celebrated Dr. Armand de Montalban, of Paris," would 'lecture on the Science of Phrenology.'"<sup>57</sup>

One or two other parallels to our passage in *Huckleberry Finn* may be garnered from the earlier sketches. It has been noted, for example, that the playbill could perhaps have come from Joseph M. Field's *The Drama in Pokerville*.<sup>58</sup> The spreading out of a small company to cover a large *dramatis personae* was all too common. Sol. Smith gives an amusing account of the doubling, and more, required to get *Pizarro* performed by four men and two ladies at Vincennes, Indiana, in 1820: Sol. himself had five parts, and was also the "guards."<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere he gives his share of the playbill for the performance of Tobin's *Honeymoon* at Port Gibson, Mississippi:

Rolando (a woman hater)	... Mr. Smith
Jacques (the mock Duke)	... Mr. Sol. Smith
Dr. Lampedo	... Mr. S. Smith
Lopez	... Mr. S. F. Smith <sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> A later variant of the Guyuscutus appeared in Chillicothe, Ohio: "There was a printer named Dan Shriner who lived in Chillicothe in the early nineties. His chief claim to fame was for his invention of the 'sky foogle.' The 'sky foogle,' according to Shriner, was a ferocious animal that had never before been seen or captured. Shriner hired a hall, and charged the eager crowd admission for a glimpse of the 'terror.' When the good Chillicotheans were assembled, there was a fearful rattling of chains, some horrible cries off stage, and Shriner, torn and dishevelled, burst upon the scene crying, 'Run for your lives, the terrible sky foogle has escaped.' The audience ran. They forgot to ask for their money back on the way out. Nobody ever knew what became of Shriner or, for that matter, of the 'sky foogle.'" (*Chillicothe and Ross County, American Guide Series*, compiled and written by the Federal Writers' Project of Ohio, Works Progress Administration [1938], pp. 29-30). This reference is from Professor Blair, who also referred me to C. E. Brown, *Paul Bunyan Natural History* (1935), a book which I have not been able to see.

<sup>58</sup> DeVoto, *Mark Twain's America*, p. 254.

<sup>59</sup> *Theatrical Apprenticeship*, pp. 39 ff.

<sup>60</sup> *Theatrical Journey-work*, p. 30.

There were others who put Sol. to shame:

It is represented that Mat. Chipp and his wife, a lady and gentleman of the profession, well known all over the Western country, are in the habit of playing *Venice Preserved*, *Othello*, *Richard III*, &c., with the occasional aid of a large plaid shawl, sheets, and blankets, and one supernumerary—the doorkeeper! We often read of actors in four or five parts, but Mr. and Mrs. Chipp often appeared in half a dozen *pieces*.<sup>61</sup>

The King's costume, or lack of one, is reminiscent, to a point, of the method of old Dyke, a manager who felt that fleshing-tights were a foolish extravagance and customarily painted his own legs and those of his actors: buff, red, or white for tragedy and all manner of spots and stripes for comedy.<sup>62</sup>

*Harvard University*

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<sup>61</sup> Falconbridge, (J. F. Kelley) *Dan Marble* (New York, 1851), p. 23, n.

<sup>62</sup> The same, p. 71, n.

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## FLESH DECAY

by

Wm. Marion Miller

Some time ago I spent a week in northeastern Darke County, Ohio, a region in which descendants of the original French and German settlers predominate. I was told that there were still some "witch doctors" or "conjurers" who practice a sort of "healing art" and treat various diseases both known and, I fear, unknown to medical science scattered here and there throughout the country side.

An old man told me he had been cured of "flesh decay" when a boy, and later a girl of college age said she had been "measured" for the same malady. My curiosity was aroused, and I decided to learn more about this strange disease.

I began to make inquiries and soon learned that "flesh decay" was a disease of late puberty or early adolescence. The victim was apparently going into a decline—a "wasting away"—and nothing seemed to stop him (or her) in his downward path with the grave seemingly as its unavoidable goal. Medical science was of no avail, and finally "tests" were made to see if the illness could be diagnosed as "flesh decay" and steps taken to avert its ravages.

The sufferer was first "measured." He (or she, as the disease is no respecter of persons or sex) stood erect, and a string was drawn taught from the crown of the head to the base of the heel and carefully measured. Next the distance from the back of the heel to the tip of the toes was accurately determined. If the total length of the first measurement was not at least *seven* times that of the second, the patient was, beyond the shadow of a doubt, suffering from "flesh decay."

Now for the cure. I learned of two remedies, one slightly different from the other. In either case, a "conjurer" was consulted, the sufferer taking with him the *second* string used in measuring. The "doctor" made certain passes and signs over it, uttering mysterious words. Then, according to one method of treatment, he tied the string around a hot stove pipe where, as it burned to ashes, the malady left the body of the sick person. According to another method the string was placed under the iron hinge of a gate and allowed to wear away with the swinging of the gate as it opened and closed. This method presumably took longer to get results, and I do not

know if it was the more efficacious. But in any case the patient recovered.

I was told that folk still suffer from this disease and are still treated for it according to the methods I have described—how many I do not know. It is indeed an interesting survival of primitive medical lore and treatment in an entirely modern, up-to-date community in a rich and prosperous farming region where one would not suspect the existence of such beliefs.

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## MAINE MASTER-NARRATOR

by

Richard M. Dorson

One ready explanation for folktale survival lies in the phenomenon of trained professional or gifted amateur storytellers present in diverse cultures, who amass, hoard, and distribute floating story. In American civilization, as evidence gathers, the same process seems indicated; many persons may passively know and be able to repeat tales, but a few artists actively draw the long bow and spin the local yarn. The hallmarks of the American master-narrator are his avid practice of entertaining auditors with allegedly true anecdotes, an extensive repertoire that embraces well-known native tales, and a local reputation that attests his skill. Frequently the collector comes too late and the classic yarners are dead; in Maine, for example, the fame and half-forgotten tales of Roy Dudley, Mt. Katahdin guide, and Ed Grant, Rangeley guide, still circulate, tantalizingly. But good fortune brought me in touch with one Maine rural raconteur of distinction.

"Slick" MacQuoid became known to me through friends who had heard him tell stories. I met him in Wilton, Maine, on July 9, 1942, at the home of a family whom "Slick" often delighted with his fantasies. He was a hale, rather short, youngish man in the early forties, very likable, not as untutored as one might expect. In the summer he is a general handyman in Wilton; winters he spends in the Moosehead woods. "Slick" tells stories quite unselfconsciously, and enjoys telling them; the evening I met him he launched easily into fictionizing, with slight prodding from members of the group who would recall this or that favorite tale and request a repetition. Once questioned too closely, he chuckled and said, "Now you're trying to check up on me." The next afternoon I found "Slick" cutting grass at the local girls' camp and openly stated my interest; he helpfully went over the texts I had written down from memory, to correct errors or supply omissions, and told me some additional stories. As I was leaving town the morning of the 11th, I met him at the gas station, and he gave me yet more, on the spur of the moment.

"Slick" is an inveterate storyteller. On evenings around the fire he yarns to the girls at the summer camp. On a visit to Cambridge, thrown among some strangers (my friends who told me about him), he entertained the group with his whoppers; the Bass family has

heard the tales so many times they can check details in the narration; he swaps windies with woods guides in winter camps. The tall tales he tells may be stock fictions over a century old, as "The Big Bag of Game,"<sup>1</sup> or personally elaborated on the spur of the moment from given facts, as his tale of the bear fattening stolen sheep on stolen corn.<sup>2</sup> All his stories are purportedly true, and he customarily assigns the hero-role to some present listener. Also he weaves yarns about an eccentric local character, John Soule. "Slick" showed me this "character" hoeing in the camp, a skeleton man nearly ninety years old and weighing less than a hundred pounds. The first story "Slick" told in the Bass living room followed a casual mention of John Soule in the course of matter-of-fact conversation; with the ease of an artist "Slick" immediately tossed off an outrageous long bow. Once he began to tell stories, one led readily to another. The texts are solidly fixed in his mind, and when correcting my versions he knew his exact original wording.

#### ANECDOTES OF OLD JOHN SOULE<sup>3</sup>

Old John Soule is the Wilton character—85 years old, and weighing about a pound for each year. Because of his slightness he always carries a hoe on his shoulder, to weight him down to earth. One time, however, he was working on a roof when a strong breeze lifted him off and he floated right up in the air; I had to throw a rope thirty-five feet long to get him down.

One time going into town for a banquet, John got all duded up—stovepipe hat, tails, duster. Just as he was turning off the black onto a dirt road, a car came along and scared the horse; it reared and pitched John right into the ditch. He climbed out hopping mad, frothing and tearing at his stovepipe hat, which had jammed right over his ears. He struggled so hard to raise it that he lifted himself right off the ground.

#### TWO DEER WITH ONE SHOT

After walking the thirty miles from Seboomook to Caucomgomoc in the morning, John Bass and I sighted two deer some distance apart. John had only one bullet left, but he said he'd get both those

<sup>1</sup> For a version of this tale, see R. M. Dorson, "Jonathan Draws the Long Bow," *New England Quarterly*, XVI (June, 1943), 259.

<sup>2</sup> For a tale utilizing these motifs, see R. M. Dorson, "Just B'ars," *Appalachia*, n. s. VIII (Dec. 1942), 183.

<sup>3</sup> The titles to the stories are mine; but "Slick" does tend to refer to his stock tales by a name.

deer anyway. He went up to a tree about halfway between them and stuck his jackknife in it. Then he came back to where I was, took aim at his knife and fired at it. I'll be a son of a sliver from a piece of liver if that bullet didn't split clean in two on the handle of the knife and each half bounce off and kill a deer.

#### KILLING AND CLEANING A DEER WITH ONE SHOT

Best shot I ever knew was George Parker, who used to guide up around Moosehead. George and I spotted a deer in the woods one day, some 250 yards away; George said he'd get him from there. But after George had made his shot, the deer reared up and leaped off; I felt so badly I didn't tell George he had missed him clean. We went to pick up his track, and found that deer dead all right, and cleaned as well. George had hit him right in the brisket, and jumping up after he had been hit, he landed on a windfall with his innards hanging out, and his hind legs had kicked them out clean. A piece of his liver shot off and killed a partridge.

#### THE PARTRIDGE AND THE SWEATER

Did you ever hear how Mardi Bass right here shot the partridge? Well, last fall Mardi was coming along that same road from Seboomook to Caucomgomoc when she spied a partridge and took a shot at him. She didn't kill him, but she knocked all the feathers off him. When Mardi got home she felt so badly about it she sat right down and knitted that partridge a sweater, and put it on him, and let him go. This spring Mardi saw that partridge with five little partridges behind, all wearing little sweaters. And one of them had the prettiest little feather-necked ruff you ever saw.

#### THE FISH AND THE FRYING PAN

This actually happened to a fisherman up at Moosehead. He had caught a five-pound trout, and was going to fry it for supper. While it was cooking over the fire, he turned away for a minute to get a plate, and when he looked around, the fish had flopped off with the frying pan, by gorry. Next spring that fisherman caught the same fish, with the frying pan on his tail, and the next five fish he caught all had little frying pans on their tails.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For variants and parallels to the above two tales, see the *Portland (Me.) Telegram*, July 23, 1934, "The Anchored Partridge"; Holman Day, *Up in Maine* (Boston, 1902), pp. 8-10; Herbert Halpert, "John Darling, A New York Munchausen," *Journal of American Folklore*, LVII (April-June, 1944), 105, "The Sow and the Cart."

## THE SNAKE, THE FROG AND THE LIQUOR

Earl Sawyer here can tell you about a real surprising thing that happened to us on a fishing trip. It was up at Lake Mooselockmeguntic, and the general law had been taken off bait so we could use anything—worms, smelt or anything. But we only had flies, so we looked around for a frog, and saw a black snake swimming carrying one half-devoured in its mouth. We netted the snake, and pried the frog out of its jaws, and cut it up for bait. The snake kept following us with its jaws open the way they had been when carrying the frog; Earl felt sorry for it and poured a little liquor down its throat. Well, we had pretty good luck with the frog bait and in about an hour it was all gone. Earl said, "Lord, I wish we had another frog," and began looking around for one, when he felt a tugging at his trouser leg—and there was that snake back with another frog.<sup>5</sup>

## "YOU TAKE OFF TEN POUNDS . . ."

Two fishermen met at the Parker House in Boston and started to talk about their luck. One said he had caught a twenty pound salmon in Mooselockmeguntic. The other said that the year before he had been out night fishing and the lantern fell out of the boat. A couple of months later he was trolling and felt a heavy tug at the line, and pulled up the lantern—still lit. "Come now, you don't expect me to believe that," said the first fisherman. "All right," answered the other, "You take off ten pounds and I'll put out the light!"<sup>6</sup>

## THE UNSUCCESSFUL MINISTER

Everyone else in the lake was having good luck—not the minister. He kept trolling without landing a thing; people passed by, asked him how he was doing—nothing doing. Finally some one suggested he spit on his worm. Still no luck. Then the party advised him to give his worm some liquor, and poured some into the minister's hands. He gave it to the worm, and in a minute felt a terrible tug

<sup>5</sup> Cf. "The Snake and the Frog", *Portland (Me.) Telegram*, July 23, 1934; Herbert Halpert, "Tall Tales and Other Yarns from Calgary, Alberta," *California Folklore Quarterly*, IV (Jan. 1945), 45, "Convivial Snake."

<sup>6</sup> Cf. "The Big Fish and The Light", *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, I (Dec., 1942), 91.

—he reeled in and found that worm had wrapped itself around a two and one-half pound trout.<sup>7</sup>

#### THOSE ARMY MULES

My father bought up a couple of army mules after the last war to work on the farm. Those mules were too cussed lazy to do any work, but my brother Jimmy and I made up our minds we'd teach them. We put green glasses on 'em and fed 'em shavings, but still they wouldn't work. Then one morning we led 'em out and hitched 'em head on to the plow, and showed them a big sign nailed up on the plow—"Work." It took the hired man five gallons of oil to keep the plow point from heating, those mules tore over the ground so fast. They plowed 165 acres that day; we hauled water for three days to cool the ground. The hired man planted corn. After he had planted three acres he looked around to see how he was doing. The ground was still so hot that when the corn came up it popped; the old man thought it was snowing and froze to death.<sup>8</sup>

#### OUTRACING A BOAT

In the old days we used to wear "reacher" skates—long iceskates that reached way over the foot, were clamped to the heel and strapped to the sole. One day I raced a boat on the St. John's from Woodstock to Frederickton on my skates, and beat it by an hour and a quarter. I'd have done better, only I fell in some air holes and would have drowned if I hadn't had presence of mind to swim to shore and get some logs to help me to climb out.<sup>9</sup>

#### FANCY LOG-ROLLING

George Bass was pretty good at log-rolling, so I told him he ought to go into the championships at Lake Marancook. He went down and got into the finals against the champion, Eberhard. They started at noon; by four o'clock George had worn out the spikes on the arch of his boot and couldn't clench the log; I went back to Wilton and got him another pair of driving boots from the Bass

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Burlington Liars' Club, *The 25 Best Lies of 1933* (Burlington, Wis.), [3], "The Worm Turned."

<sup>8</sup> For the popcorn motive, cf. *Yankee*, V (Jan. 1939) 9; "The Popcorn Frost," *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, I (Aug., 1942), 48 and note.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. "Hunter Goes for Axe—To Free Himself," *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, I (Dec., 1942), 91-92; Harold W. Thompson, *Body, Boots and Britches* (Phila., 1940), 290.

Company. Well, George held on till well after supper, but about nine o'clock he gave out—he'd worn his end of the log all away, he turned so much faster than Eberhard.

#### DOGFISH COME IN HANDY

Coming back to St. Andrews after the war, I went on a fishing smack, equal shares among the captain and four hands, in Passamaquoddy Bay. After the first trip the shares came to ten dollars apiece; thinking this easy money, I asked the captain to put out for a second trip right away. He agreed without thinking, and when another catch had been made and the boat was coming back, one of the hands ran up to tell the captain the edgings [for fuel] were about gone. Quick as a flash the captain remembered a dogfish school they had just passed, and put the boat around. When they reached the school, two hands leaned alongside and scooped the fish aboard with their nets, a third held them down and tickled them, and I fed the bark into the boilers.

#### THICK FOG

You talk about heavy fog, back home in Brunswick we were shingling the roof one morning, my four brothers and myself, and Mel and I were on the side facing the bay. What bay?—Passamaquoddy. It was a foursided roof; we kept right on shingling, Mel and I, until the sun came out and lifted the fog, when we found ourselves a quarter of a mile over the bay.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The Thick Fog is one of the commonest American tall tales. Two New England versions follow:

Jerry Pratt, the witty Williamstown stage driver, once attempted to describe a dense fog which for several hours shut down with remarkable thickness over the Hoosac Valley. "Why," said Jerry, "I was shingling a shed that morning, and I shingled right over three feet of that fog before I knew it." (*The Berkshire Hills*, Oct. 1, 1901.)

At its base [Ball Mountain] lived one of Westport's "characters", Bradley B. Baker (1832-1917). He was a Civil War veteran, a boat builder and a notorious creator of anecdotal fiction. For instance: One day he was on the roof shingling his shop and the fog on the river was so thick that he could not see the edge of the building and shingled ten feet out on to the fog and only noticed then where he was because "the nails didn't seem to hold." (Edward C. Birge, *Westport, Connecticut* (New York, c. 1926), 68-69.)

## TWO FARMERS

Say Tom, why is it that your black cow eats green grass and gives white milk and yellow butter?

Tom scratched his head and thought awhile. I dunno, unless it's for the same reason that blackberries are red when they're green.

## MOOSELOCKMEGUNTIC

You know how Lake Mooselockmeguntic got its name? An Indian out hunting saw a moose and said "Moose-look-m'gun-quick."

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## LOUISIANA TALES OF JEAN SOT AND BOUQUI AND LAPIN

by

Calvin Claudel

Louisiana is a state rich in folklore. From the French tradition there are a number of stock folk characters that represent aspects of human nature, showing a cross-section of social relationship and behavior. For instance, there is the fool *Jean Sot*, or Foolish John, who always does things perversely and stupidly, to the woe and despair of his people. Sometimes, as if by chance, he displays a flicker of wisdom which ordinary persons do not possess. One feels that the narrator, having made Jean Sot the repository for all human doltishness, makes an about face on rare occasions and shows that there may be a round-about common sense in his mad folly, implying that one may not be so stupid after all. *Jean Sot* is found in folklore under some name or other in almost every cultural tradition.

Then there are the Bouqui and Lapin types (two rabbits) that are more or less universal. Bouqui is slow witted and the scapegoat, while Lapin is the clever trickster, getting the best of Bouqui. But for their names they play the parts of human beings. They generally form a duo in many undertakings, coupled together as counterparts of human life. In some few Louisiana tales it may be the wolf that will take on the Bouqui scapegoat role. Bouqui will at times shade off from the slapstick victim into the dull and hardened petty bourgeois type. Lapin sticks to the part of the leisured and care-free character, to whom everything comes through wit and frippery. No doubt, too, we can see in them prototypes of our earliest literary comedies. Bouqui is the more interesting of the two. His name in African Ouolof means *hyena*.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a person in Louisiana may be called "Bouqui," meaning he is selfish and stupid.

Bouqui and Lapin stories seem to have taken stronger root in Louisiana than anywhere else, although they are found in Haiti, Santo Domingo, the Bahamas and Missouri.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Calvin Claudel and J. M. Carrière, "Three Tales from the French Folklore of Louisiana," *Journal of American Folklore* (January-March, 1943). For a study of Jean Sot, see Marie Theriot and Marie Lahaye, "The Legend of Foolish John," *SOUTHERN FOLKLORE QUARTERLY*, VII (1943).

<sup>2</sup> For all the *Bouqui and Lapin* tales, except for the "Sack of Peas and the Mule," told by my mother, I am grateful to the Librarian of Louisiana State University for permission to use them. They are from Lafayette Jarreau's and Remi Lavergne's collections from Pointe Coupée Parish, Louisiana. I have translated these from the Creole dialect, giving an exact reproduction of the originals into English.

## BOUQUI AND LAPIN

## The Wine, the Farm, the Princess and the Tarbaby

One day Comrade Lapin was working with Comrade Bouqui<sup>3</sup> on a farm. They were cropping together that year, and they had arranged to divide the crop equally at the end of the year. It was very hot that day, and Comrade Lapin wanted to fool Comrade Bouqui in some way or other.

"What do you say if we buy a jug of wine today?" suggested Lapin.

"Fine!" agreed Bouqui. "You will go get it yourself."

Comrade Lapin went to fetch the wine. When he returned, he put it in a ditch where there was shade. He went to work again, but did not try to keep up with Bouqui. He took his time, cheating on his comrade. Bouqui was working fast to get finished, and Lapin was far behind. Suddenly Lapin exclaimed:

"Ooh!"

"What's the matter?" requested Bouqui.

"There's someone calling me," explained Lapin.

"Go see who it is," suggested Bouqui.

Lapin left, went toward the jug and took a drink. When he returned, Bouqui asked him why he had stayed so long.

"I was called for a christening," explained Lapin.

"Is that so?" questioned Bouqui. "What did you name the baby?"

"I named him First-One," continued Lapin.

They started working, and soon Comrade Lapin was called again. He went to take another big drink. When he returned, he told Bouqui it was another christening and he had called the baby Second-One. Next he went to perform a third christening and named this baby Third-One. This time he finished drinking all the wine, turning the jug over before he returned to his work.

"Ah now!" exclaimed Bouqui when it was time to quit, "let's go drink us some wine now."

They went to the jug and saw it was turned over. There was not a drop of wine left in the jug.

"Too bad!" declared Lapin. "Our wine is all lost."

<sup>3</sup> Jarreau spells this name "Bhouki." There could hardly be any reasonable explanation for this spelling, however. In Fortier and Carriere it is spelled "Bouki." Yet it would seem more logical to use a French form of spelling, "Bouqui." It is derived from African Ouolof "bookie," meaning *hyena*.

Bouqui was sad, disappointed and tired. Comrade Lapin felt good as he returned to his cabin.

A little while after that Bouqui and Lapin went into the field to see their potatoes. There was a good crop. The potato plants were big and full of flowers. They stayed there a long time, talking and admiring their labor.

"It's almost time to dig our potatoes," said Lapin "How are we going to divide our crop? Do you want to take the roots, and I'll take the plant?"

"Oh no!" replied Bouqui, "myself I want the pretty plant."

"As you wish," agreed Lapin.

When they took in the potato crop, Bouqui brought all the pretty plants into his storeroom. He had nothing at all. Lapin took the roots, and he had food for the whole year.

Later on it was time to harvest the crop of corn. Bouqui made up his mind that Lapin would not fool him on the corn. He said he wanted the roots this time, and Lapin told him to choose as he wanted again. Bouqui took the roots, taking them to his storeroom, and he had nothing. Lapin took the stalks, and he had a lot to eat for the whole year.

During the winter Bouqui went to ask Lapin for something to eat. Lapin refused him. Bouqui almost died from hunger that year, and he decided not to work on shares with Comrade Lapin anymore.

Comrade Bouqui was very dissatisfied, but he was to be still more unhappy yet before he would be done with Lapin.

They were courting the same girl, a princess. She was a pretty girl, and she liked Lapin better. Bouqui was jealous, and he wanted to know whether he or Lapin would marry the girl.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," suggested Comrade Bouqui to Lapin one day. "We'll have a race. We'll leave here together tomorrow morning. He who gets at the girl's place first will marry her."

"Fine!" agreed Lapin. "We shall run a race."

As they had planned, the following morning they started the race. Comrade Lapin beat him by a long distance. When Bouqui got there, he asked Lapin to give him another chance.

"What do you want to do this time, Comrade Bouqui?" asked Lapin.

"Let's see," thought Bouqui, scratching his head. "Oh yes! let's boil a big pot of water, and he who jumps over it wins the girl. Do you want to try that?"

"As for me, I'll do whatever you want," replied Lapin.

They boiled some water until it was boiling over. They placed it in the yard by the house, and it was decided that Lapin should jump first. Lapin started running to make his jump; but when he got up to the big pot, fear seized him and he did not jump.

"It's high, yes!" exclaimed Lapin.

He tried again. This time he jumped it.

"It's your turn now, Bouqui," said Lapin.

Bouqui started running. When he jumped, he fell into the middle of the pot. The water was so hot, he was cooked before he could count to four.

After that Bouqui's family had a grudge against Lapin. They blamed Lapin for the death of their son, Bouqui; and they watched for the chance to pay him back in the same way.

Comrade Lapin would come to steal water from their well every night. Now old man Bouqui knew it was Lapin who was stealing his water. When Lapin came for water that night, he saw a little tarbaby. He could not make out who it was. He walked all around it, looking closely. Finally he got up enough courage to talk to it.

"Get away from that well!" cried Lapin.

But it did not act as if it heard. Lapin advanced more closely, crying out:

"Go away! Go away, before I hit you a blow with my foot."

But it did not pay any attention at all. Comrade Lapin struck a blow with his foot, and his foot stayed stuck.

• "Let my foot go!" cried Lapin. "Let me go, or I'll strike you with my other foot."

As he struck, the other foot stayed stuck, too. Lapin struck with his other two, and they stayed stuck, too. Then he struck with his head, his body, all staying stuck on the tarbaby. Lapin was well caught.

The following morning old Bouqui found Lapin in his trap.

"Now I have you!" exclaimed he. "I will go kill you, and I think I'll burn you."

"Burn me if you will!" cried Lapin, "but I beg of you not to throw me into the briars behind the fence there. That would be too mean a death."

"I am going to give you the worst death I know," added old man Bouqui, "and it's into the briars you go."

He went off with Lapin, to throw him into the briars. When he got by the fence, he threw him over. Lapin fell into the middle of the briarpatch. Old Bouqui looked through a crack to see him

die, but Lapin only laughed at him. Bouqui realized his mistake, but too late.

"You threw me exactly into my home here," shouted back Lapin, running quickly toward his place.

"He's a bad fellow, yes, that Lapin!" exclaimed old Bouqui to himself, turning homeward very regretful.<sup>4</sup>

### THE MAGIC DOOR

Bouqui had a big house full of lard. When he wanted to open the door, he would say, "Carongin!" The door would open. When he wanted to close the door, he would say, "Quiri-cacow!" and the door would close shut. Now it happened that little Lapin, Lapin's son, knew and had heard how Bouqui was accustomed to opening and closing his door. Lapin himself wanted to know how Bouqui opened and closed his door. So he asked his son.

"To open his door, he says: 'Carongin,' and to shut it he says: 'Quiri-cacow!'" explained the child.

"Well now, I shall go steal that lard of his," said Lapin.

When Lapin got by the door, he cried, "Carongin." The door opened. Then he went inside and said, "Quiri-cacow!" and the door closed. Then he took all the lard he wanted, and finally he was ready to leave, but cried, "Quiri-cacow! Quiri-cacow!" The door only creaked, closing more tightly. Finally he heard Bouqui coming.

"I am caught!" exclaimed Lapin, going to hide behind the barrel of lard.

Finally Bouqui arrived, calling out, "Carongin!"

The door opened. When Bouqui entered, he exclaimed, "It smells like fresh meat here!" Then he looked under the barrel, and he saw Lapin who was lying there.

"What are you doing there, Lapin?" asked Bouqui.

"Nothing," replied Lapin. "I had just come to look around in here."

Lapin saw he was caught. So he asked Bouqui what he was going to do with him.

"I'll burn you," declared Bouqui. Just then the sun rose over the woods. Then Bouqui said to his own little son, "Go get me some fire. I am going to burn Lapin."

Little Bouqui could not get to the fire outside, because there was

<sup>4</sup>Told by Anéus Guérin, Pointe Coupée Parish, La., and recorded by Lafayette Jarreau in his unpublished M.A. thesis *Creole Folklore of Pointe Coupée Parish*, (Louisiana State University, 1931).

a big frost outside. When Lapin saw this, he asked Bouqui to do anything else but throw him into the briars, adding that it was also all covered with frost outside.

"Burn me!" suggested Lapin.

Bouqui did not want to do what Lapin wanted. So he threw him into a big briar patch. Lapin would limp and limp, as if about to die. Finally he made out as though he was really dead. "Well, come on, Lapin, die!" cried Bouqui.

Then Lapin struck out and left the camp.<sup>5</sup>

### THE SACK OF PEAS AND THE MULE

One day Bouqui went to visit Lapin. While at the dinner table Bouqui noticed what fine vegetables Lapin's wife served—squash, pumpkin and fine celery salad.

"What fine food you have, Lapin!" remarked Bouqui. "I wish I had such wonderful vegetables for my household."

"I raise them on my farm," replied Lapin. "Why don't you start a vegetable farm yourself and farm the way I do?"

"That's a good idea," ventured Bouqui. "But I have no mule or seed to start such a farm."

After they had all eaten a while, Lapin said to Bouqui:

"I know just the thing for you, Bouqui. A farmer nearby has a mule and a sack of peas. You can probably make a bargain with him to get them. You can use the peas to start a crop."

"But what can I offer him, Lapin?" questioned Bouqui. "I have no money. My wife is all I've got."

"I'll tell you what," proposed Lapin. "Trade your wife for his mule and the peas. . . . I'm sure he'll accept. I'll talk to him and fix it up for you. . . . Tomorrow I'll come to see you."

After Bouqui had returned home, he pondered over Lapin's proposition. Finally he said to his wife, who was indeed very pretty:

"My wife, I have been thinking about swapping you for a mule and a sack of peas. We can't live in this poverty. So I really need a mule more than I need you."

Next day Bouqui heard Lapin knock at the door.

"I have brought the mule and sack of peas," explained Lapin.

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<sup>5</sup> Told by Charles Lagare. 75, 1930, Lakeland, La., and recorded by Remi Lavergne in his unpublished M.A. thesis *A Phonetic Transcription of the Creole Negro's Medical Treatments, Superstitions and Folklore in the Parish of Pointe Coupée*, (Louisiana State University, 1930).

"All you have to do now is get your wife over to the farmer's place. He has agreed to the bargain."

At first Bouqui was reluctant, for he had noticed how his wife was pretty, and he really wanted to keep her. However, his wife came up just then with her clothes all bundled and packed ready to leave and said:

"No, Bouqui, I shall go. . . . You were stupid enough to want to trade me for a mule and a sack of peas. So I'm going to leave you now for the farmer. . . . Goodbye."

This settled the bargain. Bouqui's wife left, carrying her bundle. Bouqui kept the mule and the sack of peas, and Lapin went home.

Now it happened that Lapin really wanted the mule for himself. So he began to devise a trick to get the mule away from Bouqui. That night he went to Bouqui's barn, unlocked the door and started to lead the mule to his own place. While on his way home, he clipped off the end of the mule's tail and threw it into a pond nearby, where there was a very deep hole. Next day Bouqui came to Lapin's house and knocked at the door.

"Lapin," began Bouqui, "someone must have stolen my mule. Have you seen him?"

"Why no," replied Lapin.

Just then Bouqui noticed his mule in Lapin's barn, and he exclaimed:

"That looks very much like my mule!"

"Of course not," added Lapin. "That mule has a bobbed tail. Your mule has a long tail."

"That's true enough," answered Bouqui, shaking his head, however, in a puzzled fashion.

"I'll go help you to look for your mule, Bouqui," offered Lapin, feigning sympathy.

So the two started off together. Finally Lapin reached the pond and exclaimed:

"There! Your mule slipped into the deep hole of the pond. I see his tail sticking out of the water."

Lapin walked out over the water on a fallen tree to the place where the piece of tail was floating. He reached down and pulled and pulled on the tail, making out as if he was trying to pull up the mule on the other end of the tail. Finally he flew backwards out of the water, holding the tail in his hands.

"You see, Bouqui," explained Lapin. "Your mule fell in here

and drowned. I pulled so hard, his tail came off. . . . It's no use; he is lost under the water."

"Yes, that's too bad," replied Bouqui, as he left with a look of despair.<sup>6</sup>

#### ON HORSEBACK

One day Comrade Lapin and Comrade Bouqui planned to go see some girls together. Bouqui was to come to meet Lapin at his house at four o'clock Sunday afternoon, and they would go together. At four o'clock Bouqui arrived.

"Well now, let's go," he called to Lapin.

"I don't think I can go," replied Lapin. "I was coming down my steps yesterday, and I fell down. I really believe I broke my foot, because I can't walk."

"Can't you walk just a little bit?" asked Bouqui very disappointedly.

"The only way I can go with you is if you carry me," suggested Lapin.

"I'll carry you until to the big-gate," agreed Bouqui. "But I'll put you down there, and you will have to walk the rest of the way, because the girls will laugh at me if they see that you ride me like a horse."

Lapin put on a pair of spurs and mounted Bouqui. When they got to the big-gate, Lapin got down but could not make a single step, his foot hurt him so much.

"I can't make it," complained Lapin. "If you want me to go all the way, you will be obliged to carry me a little farther."

"Oh well! get upon my back again," agreed Bouqui.

Bouqui did not want to leave his friend there and would do anything to help him. When they passed the house, the girls were all upon the gallery. See Lapin seated upon Bouqui, they wanted to laugh, but they did not laugh, because they did not want to hurt Bouqui's feelings.

Poor Bouqui placed himself next to the steps, and Lapin bounded upon the gallery, completely well. Lapin then turned toward the girls, saying:

"Didn't I always tell you Bouqui was my horse!"

The girls could no longer withhold themselves. They almost burst

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<sup>6</sup> Told by Mrs. Leota Edwards Claudel, 62, Chalmette, La., from the folklore of Avoyelles Parish, La.

with laughter at Bouqui, right in front of him. He was so ashamed he was all miserable. So he excused himself right away and left.<sup>7</sup>

### THE PEA PATCH

Bouqui the rabbit had a fine pea patch, all the pea vines growing thick and dark green among the corn, with clusters of peas hanging all over them. Lapin the rabbit passed by and saw this. He began to think up a plan to get Bouqui's peas.

Now it happened that Bouqui had a pretty daughter, but Lapin was more interested in the peas than in the daughter. Also every day Bouqui went far back into the field to work, returning in the afternoon. So Lapin went to Bouqui's daughter, saying:

"Mamselle, I just saw Bouqui this morning as he was leaving for work. He wants me to help him thin out his peas. So tie me out in the pea patch, and in the afternoon come to untie me."

Thinking Lapin was telling the truth, the daughter took a rope, led Lapin to a thick place among the pea vines and tied him to a stake. Lapin ate and ate. Finally the daughter came to untie him at the proper time.

The next day Lapin did the same thing. The pretty daughter tied him in the middle of the pea patch this time. After Lapin had been untied and had gone home, Bouqui returned and decided to go see his peas. He saw them all trampled over and eaten up.

"What is this, my daughter?" asked Bouqui. "All my peas are being trampled and eaten."

"Well, Lapin came here yesterday and today, telling me that you wanted him to give you a hand by thinning out your peas," explained the daughter. "He had me tie him in the pea patch and untie him in the afternoon. . . . He will no doubt come back tomorrow."

"That rascal!" exclaimed Bouqui. "How could you believe such a lie? Now when he comes back here tomorrow, don't untie him when the time comes. . . . I'll fix him!"

So Lapin came back the next day, stayed out eating in the pea patch until it was time for the daughter to untie him, but she did not show up. Finally Lapin cried out:

"Mamselle, come untie me! It's time for me to go."

The daughter came out and said to Lapin:

"Lapin, it's too bad; you're caught. My father Bouqui will

<sup>7</sup> Told by Anéus Guérin, Pointe Coupée Parish, La., and recorded by Lafayette Jarreau, *loc. cit.*

get you when he comes home. He'll fix you for lying to me and eating his peas."

Lapin began quaking from fear and frantically pitched himself forward at the end of the rope; but all in vain, because he was tied fast. Soon, however, Wolf came walking along the road and saw Lapin panting at this leash.

"What's wrong, Lapin?" questioned Wolf.

"Oh, come closer and I'll tell you," Lapin began to explain in a sly fashion. "It's this way, Wolf: I promised to marry Bouqui's daughter. I refused to go through with the bargain. So he's tied me out here for me to make up my mind."

"She's pretty enough, Lapin," replied Wolf. "I'd marry the girl if I had the chance."

"Fine," spoke up Lapin. "Untie me and I'll tie you instead. Tell Bouqui you're the right fellow and will marry the girl."

It was agreed. Wolf untied Lapin, and Lapin tied him up in his place. When Bouqui came home, he ran out to the pea patch with a big rawhide whip. As soon as Wolf saw him, he cried out:

"Bouqui, don't whip me! I'll marry the girl!"

"Marry what girl?" questioned Bouqui angrily. "I'll show you! I thought it was Lapin who stole my peas."

"I was fooled by Lapin," the wolf tried to explain. "He didn't tell me about eating your peas. . . . He told me he had promised to marry your daughter and wanted to back out. So I agreed to take his place."

"I must get somebody's hide," raged Bouqui. "So I'm going to whip you well, Wolf."

Bouqui whipped and whipped Wolf with a rawhide whip that had the lash soaked in salt, vinegar and pepper. Wolf limped away howling, as Bouqui added:

"And don't ever let me catch you around my daughter either!"

Now Wolf was so angry that he decided to go in search of Lapin, vowing vengeance for the trick played on him, which was not only causing him much bodily pain but had also humiliated him very much. Wolf could not walk very fast. So Lapin saw him coming and quickly ducked into a hole, peeping out from the ground with one eye, as rabbits usually do. When Wolf saw this eye, he thought it was the eye of the earth.

"Hello, ground," greeted Wolf. "Have you seen Lapin pass this way?"

"Yes," answered the eye. "I saw him pass a long, long time ago, hopping off into that direction."

Wolf limped on. Lapin got ahead of Wolf by a roundabout way. Wolf caught his scent and followed Lapin's trail again. Lapin did the same thing when he saw Wolf upon him.

"Ground, have you seen Lapin anywhere around here?" requested Wolf a second time.

"Yes," replied Lapin, changing his voice to a gruff tone, "but that was a long while back. . . . Besides Lapin said he was leaving town."

So Wolf hobbled away, none the wiser, never catching Lapin.<sup>8</sup>

### FOOLISH JOHN

#### The Cowhide

Foolish John and his mother lived by the bayou in Louisiana and they spoke French. He was such a foolish lad he misunderstood everything he was told.

"Foolish John, go get the cow by the bayou and drive her into the lot," said his mother.

In the French they spoke, "to drive" can also mean "to push." So Foolish John went to fetch the wheelbarrow and rolled it out to where the cow was pasturing. He placed her into the wheelbarrow and rolled her home. When he reached home, he was panting and sweating like a horse.

"What in the world are you doing, Foolish John?" questioned his mother.

"Well, Mama, you told me to push the cow here, and that's what I'm doing."

"Fool! will you ever learn anything!" exclaimed the exasperated woman. "Now take that cow out of there and go milk her."

As with many words that have double meanings, "to milk" also meant "to shoot."

While his mother was busy inside, Foolish John went to get the gun and shot the cow. When he appeared inside without the milk, his mother became worried.

"Foolish John, where is the milk for supper?" she asked.

"Why, Mama, I thought you meant for me to shoot the cow with a gun. . . . That's what I did," replied the lad.

<sup>8</sup> See E. A. McIlhenny, *The Progress*, Hammond, La., June 3, 1938.

"Ah, foolish son!" she cried, "killing our only cow. . . . Now you must go skin her and sell the hide so we can buy food, because we don't have milk. . . . Hurry now!"

Foolish John fetched the big butcher knife, strung the cow up to a tree by her hind legs and skinned her—head, feet and everything. He put the hide over his head and set out for town. As he walked under the hide, he looked like a strange beast.

It was getting dark and growing cold, for it was almost winter. He reached a tree that was losing its leaves. The tree groaned and shivered as the cold wind whistled through its limbs.

"That poor tree must be cold," remarked Foolish John to himself. "I'll cover it with this hide to keep it warm."

He began climbing the tree with the cowhide still on his head. When he was up in the top ready to place the hide over the tree, a band of seven men suddenly came and sat down in a circle under the tree. They were robbers with a huge sack of money. The chief began to divide the money.

"This is for me. . . . That's for you," counted the chief as he placed each robber's share before him.

Everytime he said this, Foolish John would pluck a hair from his cowhide and cry, "And one hair for me—eee!"

"Listen, listen, the Old Devil!" would exclaim one of the robbers, and the chief would start to divide again. The dividing and counting continued far into the night, and each time the chief would say, "This is for me. . . . That's for you," Foolish John would add while plucking out hair, "And one hair for me—eee!"

Finally when they had all the money spread out, and Foolish John had picked his cowhide clean, he suddenly lost his grip on the limb he was holding and crashed to the ground right into the middle of the circle of thieves. When they beheld this strange apparition with horns, they all took to their heels and fled. Foolish John gathered up the money, placed the hide over the tree and went back home.

"Well, how much did you get for the hide?" inquired his mother.

"I collected a dollar for every hair on the hide," answered Foolish John, laying down the heavy sack load of money.

"Foolish John!" exclaimed the mother with joy, "sometimes I think you are not so foolish!"<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Told by Jack Vidrine, Eunice, La. See also Charles Roussey, *Contes populaires, recueillis à Bournois* (Paris, 1894), nos. 8, 22.

## FOOLISH JOHN AND THE RAIN

Foolish John had just put on a nice, clean suit of clothes and was ready to go somewhere for his mother.

"Foolish John," warned his mother, "be careful not to get caught in the rain with your nice, clean clothes. It looks like bad weather. Don't forget to duck out of the rain if it begins to fall."

"All right, Mother," answered Foolish John, as he set out on his way. However, he had hardly reached the bayou bridge when a great peal of thunder brought down a shower of rain. Foolish John realized he was in the rain and wanted to get out of it, remembering what his mother had told him. He saw no shelter nearby, as he stood on the bayou bridge. So he thought and thought. Finally he jumped from the bridge into the bayou, in order to get out of the shower. As he stood in the muddy bayou water, his hat remained over the water on his head that stuck out of the bayou. He took off his hat and held it under the water.

When Foolish John reached home, his mother saw him all wet and covered with mud from head to feet.

"Foolish John!" she exclaimed, "didn't I warn you to keep out of the rain? You are not only wet but all covered with mud."

"Well, Mother," explained Foolish John, "you told me to duck out of the rain if it came. When it did, I ducked into the bayou. I even held my hat under the bayou out of the rain."<sup>10</sup>

*University of North Carolina*

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<sup>10</sup> Told by Tony Lelong, New Orleans, La.

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## "SPELLING RIDDLES" FROM THE OZARKS<sup>1</sup>

by

Paul G. Brewster

The following so-called riddles are rather trick or "catch" questions, the answers to which are pretended spellings in doggerel of the words propounded. Sometimes, as in Nos. 3, 7, 8, and 14, the first part of the word is spelled correctly. In the type represented by Nos. 4, 5, 10, 12, and 16, there is no attempt at spelling, the emphasis being upon the sound of certain syllables and their resemblance to words given in rude verse. In still another type, Nos. 17 and 18, the shape of the letters is the thing stressed.

1

Spell pumpkin pie:      P-U umpkin, umpkin, I,  
                                 P-U umpkin,  
                                 Pumpkin pie.

2

Spell huckleberry pie:      H-U huckle, B-U buckle,  
                                 C-U cuckle, Y,  
                                 N-U nuckle, T-U tuckle,  
                                 Huckleberry pie.

3

Spell woodpecker:      W double O D, wood,  
                                 Sockety peck,  
                                 Run around the limb,  
                                 And stick his bill in—  
                                 Woodpecker.

4

Spell Cincinnati:      A needle and a pin spells sin-sin,  
                                 A gnat and a fly spells Cincinnati.

5

Spell Joe Brown:      A handle and a hoe spells Joe,  
                                 A hat and a crown spells Brown,  
                                 Joe Brown!

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<sup>1</sup> This is part of a collection of Ozark riddles made by Vance Randolph, most of which was edited by Archer Taylor and published in a recent number of the SOUTHERN FOLKLORE QUARTERLY. The only contribution of the present writer is the adding of Nos. 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 from his Indiana collection.

## 6

Spell sop-an'-taters: <sup>2</sup> B-Y-R, B-Y ater,  
S-O-P, T-Y tater,  
Sop an' taters!

## 7

Spell horseback: H-O-R-S-E horse,  
B-A bick-a-back—  
Horseback!

## 8

Spell lampblack: L-A-M-P lamp,  
B-L-A bick-a-back—  
Lampblack!

## 9

Spell ramsack (ransack): R-A-M ram,  
S-I-C sick-a-sack,  
Ramsack!

## 10

Spell snapping turtle: Snopey snappin',  
Fat an' tickin',  
Turtle, turtle,  
Snappin' turtle.

## 11

Spell grasshopper: G-R-A double leather, repper whopp,  
Whee O double, leather, repper whopper,  
Grasshopper.

## 12

Spell Constantinople: Can you count, can you stand,  
Can you count, standy I,  
Can you nople, can you bobble,  
Constantinople.

## 13

Spell stovepipe: X-O-V-E,  
Jigger, wigger, Y P E ,  
Stovepipe.

## 14

Spell grasshopper: G-R-A-S-S, tiddy whopper, tiddy whopper,  
G-X-N-A-R,  
Grasshopper.

<sup>2</sup> Gravy and potatoes.

15

Spell squirrel: Squee diddle r-l,  
Squirrel.

16

Spell Cincinnati: Cin-cin, needle 'n' pin,  
Gnat an' a fly,  
Gnat's eye,  
Cincinnati.

17

Spell Hell: H-E- two hockey sticks,  
Hell.

18

Spell Mississippi: Double hump—I—crooked back, crooked  
back—I—PP(?)—I,  
Mississippi.

*University of Indiana*

PLATE  
No. 1  
1892

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